(b) The National Federation of the Blind submitted a list of demands to the Ministry which broadly covers the demand for amendment of the The persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995', recruitment and promotion of visually handicapped persons in various Ministries/Departments/Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), protection of their interests while disinvesting PSUs, reservation of seats in educational institutions, opening of hostels for blind students in every State, housing loans from the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation, allotment of land/ shops, rehabilitation of blind hawkers earning their livelihood at railway stations, etc.

(c) The demand charter has been referred for action to the concerned Ministries/Departments of Government of India and the Federation as been informed regarding this.

(d) The implementation of the PWD Act, 1995 requires a multi sectoral approach involving different Ministries/Departments of Government of India, State Governments, autonomous bodies, voluntary organizations and civil society. This is reviewed periodically in meetings of the Central Coordination Committee and Central Executive Committee and followed up with the concerned authorities.

Rag-pickers in civic services

2133. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government would provide gloves, masks and rubber boots to all the rag-pickers helping in waste segregation;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the action proposed as welfare measures to help the rag-pickers in their civic services?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRI NAGMANI): (a) and (b) As per the information furnished by the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation, there is no such proposal.

(c) The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment does not have any specific scheme for the welfare of rag-pickers. However, it is

implementing a scheme named. An Integrated Programme for Street Children with the objective to prevent destitution and withdrawal of children from the life on street and their placement into national mainstream. The programme provides for shelter, nutrition, health care, education and recreational facilities to street children, and seeks to protect them against abuse and exploitation. The beneficiaries covered under the Programme may include rag-pickers.

Besides, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has undertaken an initiative called Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, in an effort to universalize elementary education. The objectives of the initiative are *inter-aliaXo* ensure that all children complete five years of primary schooling by 2007, and eight years of elementary schooling by 2010. It covers the entire country with a special focus on educational needs of girls, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and children in difficult circumstances.

Superstitions among tribals

†2134. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state: -

(a) whether it is a fact that there are grave superstitions among the tribal communities of the country;

(b) if so, the details of dealth of tribal people caused due to these superstitions States-wise; and

(c) the steps being taken by Government to get these communities relieved of these superstitions?

THE MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JUAL ORAM): (a) and (b) It is a fact that several superstitions are prevailing among the tribal communities of the country and deaths of tribals are also reported from time to time on this account. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is, however, not maintaining any data regarding the deaths of tribal people due to superstitions.

(c) The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is implementing several Schemes for promoting education amoncst the Scheduled Tribes, namely, Girls/

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.